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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NORTH DARFUR SECURITY SITUATION

REF: KHARTOUM 538

EL FASHER

11. (SBU) Following the shooting in El Fasher's market April 6 perpetrated by Arab janjaweed militia (reftel), armed militia members re-entered the market later that same day and engaged GoS forces there while attempting to loot the Bank of Khartoum. Shots were heard again between 0030-0100 April 7 as Arab militias went back to the market. A UNDSS source reported on April 7 that one more person died of injuries from April 6 shooting, which would bring the death toll to two. However, the North Darfur Minister of Health told FieldOff on April 9 that he had visited the hospital where three wounded had been admitted and confirmed, contrary to inflated press numbers and other reports, that only one person had died in the violence.

12. (SBU) By April 8, the market area was relatively quiet, with limited traffic and with roughly half the shops open for business. The GoS security presence remained high in the market area, including Military Intelligence near the Bank of Khartoum. As of noon on April 9, regular activity in and through the market area had resumed, with a continued armed GoS presence on the scene. 2. (SBU) GoS helicopter "gunships" were observed for two days in a row over the city following the shooting incidents, and the GoS security presence around town remained high, with frequent GoS vehicle movement to the military area of the city near the Wali's residence.

KABKABIYA, TAWILA AND KUTUM

13. (SBU) In a similar incident, local eyewitnesses reported April 7 that a group of Arab militia, numbering up to ten, entered the Kabkabiya market and picked a fight with GoS soldiers there. Exchange of fire ensued, and three people were killed (confirmed by the North Darfur Minister of Health on April 9), with three others in the hospital being treated for injuries. GoS soldiers later entered the market area to secure it, and as of 1700h on April 7, the area was calm. The Arab militia perpetrators were reported to be on the move north of Kabkabiya in two vehicles.

14. (SBU) Similar disturbances were reported at the Tawila market on April 8. UNAMID sources noted that on April 8 a 12-vehicle convoy of El Fasher Arab militia members (whom the Deputy Force Commander specified should be labeled "janjaweed") passed through Zam Zam toward Tawila and Kabkabiya.

15. (SBU) UNAMID sources on April 9 also said that Kutum Arab militias are currently mobilizing to join with El Fasher Arab militias in a show of solidarity over their shared discontent with the GoS failure to pay their salaries and with the GoS conscription policies for its Popular Defense Forces. UNAMID predicted more problems with these groups in Kutum, especially given that April 10 is the main market day there, and the Deputy Force Commander ordered

all UNAMID sector locations be put on alert.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Such events demonstrate the volatile and dynamic nature of power relationships in Darfur. These are clashes between Arab militias armed and paid (sometimes) by the authorities and their patrons in the Sudanese regimes. The Arab tribal militias are terrifying to civilians but they can be fickle allies for the regime when they are not paid. Many believe that they were used by the authorities but have not been adequately compensated for their losses in "battle." They are a paradoxical but real part of the mosaic of instability and violence in this region. End comment.

¶7. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ